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ALFORD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL



MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S ANNUAL REPORT

for the year 1954



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May 1955.

ALFORD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

*Report of the Medical Officer of Health
for the year 1954.*

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present to you the Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1954, on the health and sanitary conditions of the Alford Urban District.

I am pleased to be able to report once again that the general health of the town has been good. There was remarkably little in the way of notifiable infectious diseases and no general outbreak. The sanitary conditions of the town have given no cause for anxiety. The conversion of the pail closets to the water-carriage system has continued but at a slower rate and there is still much to be done to bring the whole town up to modern standards in this respect.

The year started with a mild January followed by a cold and bitter February. A dry and sunny spring was followed by a cold and wet summer and autumn. Farmers had great difficulty in getting in the harvest and much of it was seriously damaged. The shortage of sun throughout the second half of the year was detrimental to the vitality of the people and in particular to the aged.

Vital Statistics.

The area of the District is unchanged at 1,138 acres.

The estimated population is 2,150.

The rateable value is £11,413. The value of a penny rate is £44/7/11.

The number of inhabited houses is 860.

The live births numbered 35—23 male and 12 female. This figure compares with 29 for 1953 and 28 for 1952. The 35 births represents a crude birthrate of 16.28 per thousand of the population. After the application of the comparability factor, which affords a means of adjustment to make allowance for the differing age and sex distribution of the population in different areas, a birthrate of 18.55 is obtained. This latter figure compares with 15.2 for the whole of England and Wales. The unusually high birthrate for males as compared with females is very marked in 1954 as it was in the preceeding year.

Of the 35 births, 3, all male, were illegitimate.

There was one still-birth (female.)

The deaths numbered 41—22 male and 19 female. This figure compares with 39 in 1953 and 23 in 1952. The 41 deaths represent a crude deathrate of 19.07 per thousand of the population of Alford and when the comparability factor has been applied 12.01. This figure compares with 11.3 for the whole of the Country.

For the second year in succession I am glad to be able to report there were no deaths in infants under one year of age.

Causes of death :-

Cause	Male	Female
Tuberculosis		1
Cancer of the lungs	1	1
Cancer, other forms	4	1
Vascular diseases of the nervous system	3	6
Coronary disease of the heart	5	1
Hypertension with heart disease		2
Other forms of heart disease	2	2
Other diseases of the circulation	2	1
Pneumonia		1
Other defined and ill-defined diseases	2	1
Motor vehicle accident... ..		1
All other accidents	1	1
Suicide	2	
Total	22	19

General Provision of Health Services.

Bacteriological examinations are carried out at the Public Health Laboratories at Lincoln or Grimsby; every year large numbers of specimens are sent by medical men practising in the District and by the Council. Complete water analysis when required are sent to Messrs. W. W. Taylor of Nottingham.

Hospitals, Midwifery and Nursing services are unchanged, and continue to work satisfactorily. The Alford Memorial Hospital is in the Grimsby Hospital Group. It does not admit Maternity cases, but when such require hospital treatment admission can generally be obtained at Spilsby, Louth or Skegness hospitals.

Infectious diseases requiring admission to hospital are sent to Scarthoe Isolation except in the case of Poliomyelitis; all such cases are sent to the Infectious Diseases Hospital at Lincoln.

Medical men practising in the town tell me that primary venereal disease is rarely seen now. No cases were reported to me during the year. A special clinic is in operation for this trouble.

DIPHTHERIA. I am glad to be able to report once more that there were no cases of this disease in Alford during the year, but make no apology for again stressing the importance of immunisation against this dread disease. Before the drive to get all little children protected by immunisation started in 1940, there were many thousands of cases notified every year with an average yearly deathrate of 2,800. In 1954 throughout the country only 182 cases were reported with 9 deaths and these deaths would not have occurred if the parents had had their children protected by immunisation. Immunisation costs nothing, is practically painless and does not upset the child. It should be carried out before the first birthday with a 'booster' dose when the child goes to school.

Immunisation of Alford children in 1954 numbered 24 under five years and none between 5 and school leaving age, and 28 booster or reinforcing doses were given. I should like to be able to record a figure of 100%.

VACCINATION. During the year 17 children were vaccinated against Smallpox. There were no re-vaccinations. It is much to be regretted that a large proportion of the community at the present time has not been vaccinated.

Prevalence of Disease.

1954 was a year in which there was very little in the way of notifiable infectious disease in Alford and nothing in the way of an epidemic.

I am pleased to be able to report that there were no new cases of Tuberculosis and no cases of Acute Poliomyelitis.

There was a considerable amount of Chicken-pox among the children in the spring time and some cases of Mumps. At the end of the year influenza was widespread; the attacks were in most cases of short duration but the older people had difficulty in regaining their strength again.

There were no cases of Puerperal disease and no death from any maternal cause.

The following is a list of the notifiable infectious diseases which occurred in the Alford District during the year:-

Pneumonia	4	Erysipelas	2
Whooping Cough	1		

There were no cases of food poisoning.

Housing.

During the year steady progress has been made on the Chantry Road No. 4 Housing scheme and sixteen of the proposed twenty houses had been completed and occupied before the close of the year. The remainder being in the final stages of completion.

Towards the latter part of the year good progress was made on the erection of thirteen bungalows for aged persons on this same site. It is hoped that they will all be occupied in the early spring. The Authority now owns 127 Council-built houses and one house bought and brought up to modern standards for housing a large family from the Squatters Camp.

The number of privately built houses did not achieve that which was anticipated from enquiries made for sites, due in part to the difficulty of obtaining land suitable for private development.

Ten houses were built by an industrial concern for their employees and three other dwellings by private owners.

SQUATTERS CAMP. It is pleasing to report that the undesirable conditions which inevitably prevail at such camps have been resolved. By the end of the year all the families at the camp had been rehoused except for one consisting of thirteen persons, for whom a special house was being prepared. Except for the small area of land on which this last hut stands the whole site of the camp is in process of derequisition and will shortly be entirely cleared of occupants.

SUB-STANDARD HOUSING. The question of sub-standard houses in the District is a matter which will have to be given serious consideration at a very early date.

No survey has ever been made of conditions covering the whole town and the preliminary enquiry in which 37 houses are considered to come within the scope of the Housing Act, 1936, is insufficient both in coverage and detail for accurate assessment of the conditions over the whole town.

It is evident, however, even on this meagre basis, that the question of low rents, many around 2/- to 3/- per week, will have a vital bearing on the policy adopted by the Council, since in many cases to deal with them as individual unfit houses will be to produce a situation in which owners will be faced with 'unreasonable expense.' In these circumstances one cannot expect them to do other than take the line of least resistance.

In many cases the provisions of the 1949 Housing Act on Improvement Grants cannot be used to assist the process of preservation.

The solution would appear to be in an integrated plan of new building and reduction in numbers of cottage property by making one dwelling out of two ; thus giving space for the provision of adequate standards in sleeping rooms and other amenities.

IMPROVEMENT GRANTS. Towards the close of the year the Council decided to operate the provisions of the 1949 Housing Act with regard to Improvement Grants. At the present time no grants have been made but several provisional proposals have been the

subject of discussion with the parties concerned.

At the end of the year no Council houses have been sold but negotiations were in progress for the sale of one in Parsons Lane.

Water Supplies.

The town water supply continues to be highly satisfactory in quality and quantity. In my annual report for 1953 I mentioned that there had been a definite increase in the temporary hardness of the water and this increase has continued, the temporary hardness fluctuating between 180-260 p.p.m. This state of affairs while not affecting the purity of the water for drinking purposes does create a minor problem in boilers and circulating pipes of domestic hot-water systems.

At the yearly mechanical inspection of the pumps it was found that the process of graphitisation which had previously been thought to be a temporary phase, was continuing and that it had been sufficiently extensive to require the installation of a new pump.

I am glad to report that during the year a main was laid to the hamlet of Tothby so that the whole of the Council area is now covered by the water system.

During the year six new connections were made to the town supply.

Sewage and Refuse collection.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL WORKS. The situation at the works has been satisfactory throughout the year, and except during periods of unusually heavy flow of water, due to excessive rain in the watercourse taking the outfall, no difficulties have been experienced and the reserve of sludge drying beds has been maintained. It must be borne in mind that the plant is approaching the conditions of running at a capacity designed load, and consideration should be given to the provision of additional settlement and filtration facilities before reaching that stage.

PRIVY CONVERSIONS. During 1954 progress has been slow in the conversion of pail closets and vaults to the water-carriage system. Under the grant aided scheme 22 conversions were completed during the year, but there are still some 165 properties to be converted out of the original 390 when the scheme was put into operation. This is a high figure when we remember that, except for a very small part, our water mains and sewers cover the whole town.

Many of the properties still to be converted will have to be considered in the very near future in connection with slum clearance and the improvement of sub-standard houses.

REFUSE COLLECTION. This service is a fortnightly one and covers the whole area. It has continued to work satisfactorily throughout the year and there have been few complaints of any kind. Disposal is by tipping and there is sufficient space available for some years to come. Though this method of disposal is not entirely satisfactory, it is working very well, and the tip has been kept free from nuisances such as rats, flies and smells and not been an offence to neighbouring households.

OFFENSIVE TRADES. There is one buisness in the town that comes under this heading. Conditions in regard to it have been quite satisfactory during the year.

RODENT CONTROL. Rodent control measures are carried out by a part-time operator. Periodical treatments are undertaken on Council properties and sewers and as required by the general public. Experience has shown that the majority of infestations are directly or indirectly connected with the keeping of pigs or hens. It is hoped that the public will assist in this important service by notifying the Health Department of any evidence of rat infestation.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES. Before the de-rationing of meat in July, discussions between the Council and the meat traders of the town took place, and it was agreed to continue the existing method of distribution from the supply centre at the Skegness Abattoir. Subsequently, however, four applications were received to reopen former licensed slaughter houses. In three of these cases, subject to certain works being undertaken, your Medical Officer of Health and Sanitary Inspector were satisfied that the premises, which had not been used for 15 years, could be brought up-to-date and fit for use. In the fourth case it was felt that the premises could not be brought up to the necessary standard, but the Council was not prepared in this case to take the advice of their Technical Officers.

MILK. The remaining registered producer/retailer of milk has ceased activities. All milks in the area are heated and bottled supplies.

There are no manufacturers of ice-cream now in the town. All that is retailed in Alford is pre-rapt and made by reliable firms.

FOOD PREMISES. There are the following premises selling food in the town :-

Butchers	5	Bakers/confectioners	6
Grocery Stores,		Cooked meats, etc.	5
perishable goods	7	Ice Cream	8

Condemned Foods.

The following foods have been condemned during 1954 and disposed of at the refuse tip.

Butter	10½ lbs.
Various tinned fruits	36 lbs.
Tinned meats (foreign)	18½ lbs.

In conclusion may I convey my thanks to the Chairman and Members of the Council for their assistance and support and acknowledge the help given to me by the Clerk to the Council and Mr. H. Fell the Sanitary Officer.

I have the honour to be Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman,

Your obedient servant

C. S. E. WRIGHT,

Medical Officer of Health.